



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

➤THE❖OLD❖TESTAMENT❖STUDENT.❖➤

VOL. V.

APRIL, 1886.

NO. 8.

IT IS a graceless task to criticize. The world, although full of critics, holds them in low estimation ; while critics themselves despise each other. Yet, criticism, and that of the destructive type, is often a necessity. It is doubtless more easy, and more pleasant, to praise ; just so it is more easy and more pleasant to sin ; and much of the praise, whatever may be true of much of the criticism, *is* sinful. There are those who praise every thing ; there are those who criticize every thing. The one class is as culpable as the other. There is a time to praise ; a time also to criticize. Let both of these duties be exercised judiciously.

The question of Bible-study in the theological seminary is one which demands consideration ; nor will it drop out of sight, until a better understanding of the facts in the case, of the evils existing, shall have been obtained. As long as the prime object *for* which the seminaries were instituted, is neglected, as long as the Bible receives only cursory attention in what are supposed to be Bible-schools, *so* long will there be need of criticism. In such cases, there is danger, it is true, of including those who do not deserve criticism with those who do deserve it. It is impossible, in the very nature of the case, to make any but general exceptions. There are, without doubt, some institutions in which the best thing possible, under the circumstances, is being done. Our remarks do not apply to these institutions, but to those in which, it would seem, the worst possible is being done in this line. The question is a grave one. It resolves itself into this : Is the Bible to receive that attention at the hands of men preparing for the ministry which is necessary to make them familiar with its contents, thoroughly imbued with its spirit, and capable of handling it in an effective manner ? All this is needed by every man sent forth to proclaim the Word of God. Shall it be given him ? Shall it be required of him ?

WHILE, however, the question, in the form just given, is the general one, it will be found, upon study, to present itself in different shapes. Those who have in charge the theological education of our day have many problems with which to wrestle ; and the particular problem of Bible-study in itself offers much that is difficult. Let us, briefly, analyze the subject. What in detail are the questions which are being asked and which must be answered ? For our purpose, they may be roughly classified under five heads :

1. *The attention paid by Seminaries to Bible-study (in the strict sense of the term).*

Is it sufficiently emphasized ? Do men, generally, leave the Seminary with that real acquaintance with the Bible which they ought to have ? Is the demand for a deeper, broader study of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, well grounded ?

2. *The study of the Bible in English in the Seminary.*

Would this be attended with good results ? Are there kinds of Bible-work which can be done as well from the English Bible as from the Bible in the original languages ? Does the importance of the subject make desirable a separate department for the study of the Bible in English, in addition to the closer exegetical work done upon the basis of the original ?

3. *The study of Biblical Literature and History.*

Is this work worthy of a greater attention than is now being given it ? Would it be well to require of every student a detailed knowledge of *Biblical* history as well as of *Church* history ? How far should questions of "higher criticism," the most plausible, be considered in the class-room ? To what extent is Biblical history of value in furnishing material for illustration, as compared with Church history ?

4. *The study of Hebrew.*

Is too much or too little time given to the acquisition of Hebrew ? Should the study be recommended to all divinity students ? Should a knowledge of Hebrew be required for graduation from the theological seminary ? Is the time spent by many men in this study practically lost ? Is there danger of using time in this way which could be employed to greater advantage in the study of the English Bible ? Would it be well for men to be prepared in the principles of the language before entering the Seminary ? Is such a plan practicable ? Should such a preliminary knowledge of the Hebrew be *required* for admission to the Seminary ?

5. *The question of Biblical Theology as distinguished from Systematic Theology.*

Is there ground for the distinction now coming to be made ? Is the department of Biblical Theology one of real practical importance ? Is it worthy of recognition as a distinct department with a separate professor ?

WISDOM is confined to no one man, profession or locality. It is the consensus of opinion which has weight. We furnish, therefore, to our readers, in this number, a symposium upon the subject of *Bible-*

study in the Theological Seminaries. It will be noticed that in most cases the opinions expressed are directly in answer to the questions given above in detail. The contributors to the symposium are men of the highest reputation in the ministry and in religious journalism. They are men who know, if any one knows, the public feeling. The May number of THE STUDENT will contain a continuation of the discussion. Lack of space forbids its completion in one number. It is hardly to be expected that on questions of such detail there should be strict unanimity. Yet the differences of opinion are very few and of a minor character. Some opinions are briefer than others; some go more into particulars than others; but in all there is the same strong feeling that the Bible does not occupy the place in the theological curriculum which it deserves. Let not the brevity of some answers, a brevity rendered necessary by the limited space at our command, detract from the interest.

An interesting fact here deserves mention. Several of those who were invited to participate in the discussion, for various reasons, were unable to do so. Of those who declined, however, the majority assigned as their reason for so doing the fact that they did not wish to *criticise publicly* the management of the theological seminaries. The inference from this must be, that their opinion, if expressed, would have been a public censure; but this they felt unwilling to utter. The truth is, as indicated in a former number of THE STUDENT, dissatisfaction in regard to this matter is general. That there is good ground for the dissatisfaction cannot well be doubted in view of the facts. Let us have a free expression of opinion, regardless of consequences.

WERE the prince of the lower regions called on to construct for our theological seminaries a curriculum of study which he would consent to endorse, it has been suggested that, whatever he might do with Dogmatic Theology, Church History and Homiletics, no provision for Bible-study would be included. There are considerations which might prompt him to continue at least some features of the other departments; but the study of the Bible would certainly be abolished. But that which *he* would do away with, we must preserve, and emphasize, and provide for in the most ample manner. What, then, it may be asked, would constitute a proper provision for such study? The following suggestions are offered:—

1. Let a larger proportion of time be given to the direct study of the Bible than is now given it in the majority of our seminaries. It is, perhaps, difficult to say what proportion of the whole time could, with justice to the other departments, be devoted to this work.

It would, however, be reasonable and fair to allot *one-half* of the entire time to the studies which are directly connected with the Bible.

2. Let the principles of Hebrew be acquired, the drudgery-work be done, before entering the seminary. This is an old suggestion. Yet to-day the possibility of its realization is greater than ever before. There are few colleges which are not able to provide instruction in Hebrew. Let it be an elective in the Senior year. For those who cannot thus gain the assistance needed, the Institute of Hebrew, organized with this as its chief object, has provided satisfactory facilities. Starting with the ability to read easily ordinary Hebrew prose, what a chance, now denied him, the student would have for mastering the contents of Holy Scripture. This plan is entirely feasible. It can be all but universally adopted within five years, if those who appreciate the necessity of it, will join hands in an effort to bring it about.

3. Let the student be impressed with the thought that Bible-study *is* important. And to this end, let special books in both Old and New Testaments be assigned him for study during the long summer vacations. It is true that his work in the preparation of sermons is taxing; but it is with Bible-study, as with prayer; no time will be lost in engaging in it. Besides, from the very beginning of his ministerial labors there will thus be formed the habit of Bible-study. Let the work assigned be presented for examination upon his return to the Seminary. This work need not be Greek or Hebrew work, but the study of the English Bible.

4. Let the study of Bible-history be required. Let every event, and every character be made a special study; and not only this; let the philosophy of this wonderful history be sought out. Let the relations of events to each other, their connection with profane history be made the subject of investigation. Fill a man with a knowledge of Bible-events, Bible-thoughts, and Bible-expression, and he will be *well* filled. Nor is the work to be done by a few informal lectures in connection with the more strictly exegetical work. It should be a separate and independent work, beginning the first week of the student's training, and closing only at his graduation.

5. Let the Bible be studied in English, in addition to the work done upon the basis of the original languages. Supposing one-half of the student's time to be given to Bible-study, let this half be divided equally between Old Testament work in Hebrew, New Testament work in Greek, and Bible-work (Old and New Testament) in English. In other words, let there be *six* departments, of equal rank, in the seminary; one of these *six* being the study of the Bible in English. It is not necessary to establish a new chair. The Old Testament Eng-

lish work should be performed by the Hebrew Professor, for none but a Hebrew Professor would be capable of doing it. The same is true of work in the English New Testament. The good effects of such a plan would be felt almost immediately.

One or two matters of minor importance might be added, but space forbids. Let us have, therefore, in our seminaries, (1) more time for Bible-study, (2) a knowledge of the principles of Hebrew required for admission, (3) the requirement of a definite amount of Bible-study during the long vacations, (4) the thorough study of Bible-history, and (5) the study of the English Bible, and the results accomplished will be more satisfactory. *All* this is needed. No one can reasonably deny the justice of the claim. Nothing less will satisfy either the students who are pursuing their course of study, or the churches by which the seminaries were founded, and in the interests of which they are supposed to be conducted.

A SYMPOSIUM ON BIBLE-STUDY IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES.

[These opinions have been expressed in reply to the questions asked above.—*Ed.*]

I have no such familiarity with the present courses of study in our theological seminaries as would justify me in criticising them; though I have a general impression, which appears to be largely shared by the public, that the time devoted to metaphysical theology is out of proportion to that devoted to Bible-study. However that may be, I am sure that the main topics of ministerial study should be these: 1) Human nature; that is the patient; 2) The Bible; that is the medicine; 3) Pastoral Theology; that is the art of applying the medicine to the patient. Scholastic theology and church history are of value chiefly, if not only, as they bear on one of these three departments. Human nature must be studied mainly in the parish; I hardly see how the Seminary can do more than give the student some hints to guide him in it. And of the other two, it is clear that a study of the Bible must precede a study of the art of applying its principles in pulpit and pastoral work. It seems to me, therefore, that the Seminary can hardly overrate the importance of Bible-study. It is equally clear that this must involve careful biblical exegesis, at least enough of it to enable the student to interpret the Scripture himself, and not be wholly dependent on the commentaries and glosses of others. Such dependence makes him a scribe instead of a prophet. It also ought to include a comprehensive study of the Bible as a whole. He ought to know the nature of the political and ecclesiastical institutions of Moses, the spirit of Hebrew poetry, and wherein it differs from that of other literatures, the line of development of Hebrew history, the great facts in Christ's life and the essential principles involved in his teachings, and the great lines of philosophic and religious thought in Paul, as well as how to construe a Greek or Hebrew text.